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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000636

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR J. FRAZER
LONDON FOR C. GURNEY
PARIS FOR C. NEARY
NAIROBI FOR T. PFLAUMER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)

SUBJECT: TWO BY-ELECTIONS CRITICAL TO ZANU-PF PRESIDENTIAL
SUCCESSION PLANNING

REF: A. HARARE 322

[B](#). HARARE 159

[C](#). HARARE 151

Classified By: Political Officer Audu Besmer for reasons 1.5 b/d

Summary:

[1](#). (C) Upcoming parliamentary by-elections pit the MDC's National Youth Chairman, Nelson Chamisa, against ZANU-PF businessman David Mutasa in Kuwadzana, and MDC businessman Pearson Mungofa against ZANU-PF heavy Joseph Chinotimba. The pre-election period has been marred by violence perpetrated mostly by members of the ruling party, and an estimated 19,000 voters have been added to the rolls in the two constituencies. Given the importance of the two seats to ZANU-PF in its bid to regain a two-thirds parliamentary majority, and the tactics it has employed thus far, we fully expect a ZANU-PF sweep of these two MDC strongholds. End Summary.

The Candidates

[2](#). (C) The upcoming parliamentary by elections on March 29 - 30 in two Harare high-density suburbs pit the MDC's National Youth Chairman, Nelson Chamisa, against ZANU-PF businessman David Mutasa in Kuwadzana, and MDC businessman Pearson Mungofa against ZANU-PF heavy (and intellectual flyweight) Joseph Chinotimba. Chamisa is the charismatic MDC national youth leader, who has pressed for a more confrontational but peaceful approach to the regime. David Mutasa is an established Kuwadzana businessman / grain miller, who is licensed to distribute maize, which he has done repeatedly to ZANU-PF cardholders since the by-election was announced in January. Mutasa told Poloff on March 25 that it was "a fact" that he had already won the seat. Mungofa, the MDC candidate for Highfield, owns a diamond cutting firm and stationery supply house; he is an ex-ZAPU member, who lost a parliamentary election bid for Hwedza in 2000. War Veteran Chinotimba was the self-described leader of the farm and factory invasions and the right-hand man of the late war vet leader, Hitler Hunzvi.

The Carrot

[3](#). (C) Even before the dates for the by-elections were announced in January, the independent press reported that the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) was distributing maize in Highfield and Kuwadzana only to ZANU-PF cardholders. For most of the campaign period, Mutasa reportedly distributed maize at the controlled low price to ZANU-PF cardholders only. According to ZANU-PF supporters at a March 25 rally attended by Poloff, the message was clear--Mutasa's provision of maize demonstrates that he is taking care of us.

The Stick

[4](#). (C) The pre-election period in Kuwadzana and Highfield has been marred by violence perpetrated predominately on members of the opposition by ruling party supporters. National Youth Service members ("green bombers") deployed months in advance have operated out of ZANU-PF offices and public buildings, to beat and harass dozens of MDC supporters, including some MDC MPs, and the leadership of the USAID-funded Combined Harare Residents' Association (CHRA). Agents of the Central Intelligence Organization and police officers have also been implicated in violence (Ref B). On March 27, Polchief witnessed the stoning of a vehicle carrying the MDC candidate's campaign manager.

[5](#). (C) Of four rallies that the MDC scheduled for Kuwadzana, only one took place without disruption. On March 16, when ZANU-PF supporters tried to prevent an MDC rally from taking place, and tensions rose, the police fired tear gas and live ammunition into the air. In the ensuing melee the car in which MDC candidate Chamisa was riding, overturned and struck

a pedestrian, killing her. ZANU-PF rallies have come off almost daily without serious incident, save for people jockeying in queues for maize handouts.

Extra Voters

16. (C) Despite numerous attempts to acquire copies of the voters' rolls, the MDC was able to obtain them less than a week before the elections after a High Court judge ordered the Registrar-General to produce the rolls. According to a preliminary MDC audit of the lists, there are 8,000 additional voters on the Kuwadzana roll, and 11,000 additional voters on the Highfield roll, as compared to the rolls for the March 2002 presidential election. In addition, the opposition party has found that many names have been changed slightly--which would prevent those individuals from voting--or stricken from the list altogether. While a complete audit has been impossible in the limited time between the release of the rolls and the polling days, MDC officials have traveled door-to-door and confirmed that many of the added voters were unknown at the residence addresses provided, raising serious concern that large numbers of ghost voters have been added.

Other Irregularities

17. (C) The MDC has also charged that the GOZ has delivered large supplies of maize and sugar to the constituencies and intends to sell these at the very low controlled prices on the voting days at locations distant from the polling places in an attempt to lure ordinary voters away from voting. Another well-placed source has reported that residents in the rural areas of Mount Darwin, Mutoko and Magunji have been told by their village heads to be ready to travel to Kuwadzana and Highfield in Harare to vote in the by-elections.

18. (C) Officials of the government-appointed Electoral Supervisory Commission (ESC) said they have been traveling door-to-door in the constituencies explaining to residents how, if they cannot read, they can vote anyway. The adult literacy rate is 88 percent in Zimbabwe. Feigning illiteracy has been encouraged by the ruling party as a way to allow government polling officials to cast votes for the ruling party on a voter's behalf.

Comment: Likely Outcomes

19. (C) The GOZ appears determined to regain a two-thirds parliamentary majority in order to pass a constitutional amendment allowing President Mugabe to appoint his successor. We predict, therefore, that although the MDC won these constituencies by huge margins in the 2000 parliamentary elections and the 2002 presidential election, ZANU-PF will undertake the necessary electoral manipulation to win both seats this time around. Announcement of ZANU-PF victories in the MDC strongholds on March 31--the day the results are expected and the expiration of the MDC ultimatum to the GOZ--could be a recipe for unrest. If the ruling party wins Kuwadzana and Highfield and employs similar tactics in two other by-elections to be held soon--Harare Central and Zengeza--the ruling party would be one seat away from regaining the two-thirds parliamentary majority. As the ruling party has demonstrated on numerous occasions in the past, it is prepared to use tactics necessary to force by-elections in a MDC-held constituencies and to "win" these seats. End Comment.

SULLIVAN